Title: Need to include differently abled persons in the ambit of Right to Education Act-laid.

SHRI D. VENUGOPAL (TIRUVANNAMALAI): As decided in the UN Convention in 2007, the Government of Tamil Nadu has announced that the physically disabled persons must henceforth be called as 'differently abled' persons. As a compassionate gesture, the Government of Tamil Nadu has set apart in this year's Budget Rs. 176 crore for the welfare of the differently abled persons which is a marked increased from Rs. 49 crore allocated in the previous years while setting up a separate department. Even those affected by the elephantiasis have been recognized as differently abled persons as they have lost the use of their limbs and a monthly assistance of Rs. 400 will be given to those people. About 60,000 visually impaired, 50,000 physically challenged and 10,000 people affected by muscular dystrophy will be getting an enhanced monthly assistance. Tamil Nadu Government has announced tuition fee waiver for Differently Abled Youth to pursue higher education and has increased the monthly assistance from Rs. 200 to Rs 450 for stay in both Public and NGO run hostels. As there is no mental health hospital in other parts of Tamil Nadu, except in Chennai, the Government of Tamil Nadu has decided to establish an Institute of Mental Health in Theni District. Apart from that, the State Government has decided to apportion Rs. one crore every year to set up 10 Mental Health Rehabilitation Centres, each of them covering three districts. Tamil Nadu, as such, remains a pioneering model state in this regard by way of carrying out this massive scheme for the differently abled persons.

I, therefore, urge upon the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to include differently abled persons also in the ambit of Right to Education Act as it requires additional central funds for meeting the needs of special children and centre may extend more financial assistance to the Government of Tamil Nadu for all these measures.